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PROFESSOR NEMIAH ON COLLEGE TEACHING OF THE CLASSICS

In *The Dial*, for April, 1919 (66.390-393) Professor Royal C. Nemiah, of Dartmouth College, had a paper entitled *University Reconstruction and the Classics*. Part of this paper, which deals with a definite programme for the teaching of the Classics in Colleges, it seems worth while to present here.

Professor Nemiah lays down (391) two basic principles for College teaching of the Classics: (1) The teaching should reveal to the students a maximum amount of beauty, in thought, in expression, and in structure; (2) it should reveal the significance of a given work in the history of thought, "that there may be no disconnected fragments of learning seething about in the student's mind". Every work of art, he insists, should be considered in its historical setting, as one stage in the development of a type. To do this, one must himself have some conception of the type as a whole in order to appreciate the importance and the meaning of each particular stage in the development (392).

Professor Nemiah then takes as an example an actual University course (or, as I should prefer to call it, an actual College course), containing works of various authors, each representative of a different literary type. It may be noted here that Professor Nemiah had already stated that the constructive part of this discussion was based "on empirical fact—my own experience". The actual course seems to have included the *Odyssey*, Greek lyric poetry, Plato's *Apology*, and Lucian's *True History*.

First let us consider the epic. Passing over all controversial definitions, all will agree, I think, that this is one of the earliest forms of literary expression at least one of the earliest forms that was written down and thus acquired a certain degree of permanence. It is possible to find examples of the primitive epic in the early stages of most of the European languages. *Beowulf* and the *Nibelungenlied*, the *Cid* and the *Chanson de Roland* are full of tales of personal prowess which are only more modern versions of the combats of *Diomedes* and *Achilles*. The Finnish epic, the *Kalevala*, is more primitive than any of these, containing the myth of creation as well as the exploits of a great hero. Later in the development of a nation's literature come epics which are less vigorous in spirit and more formal in structure and diction. Of these scores could be named: the *Argonautica* of *Apollonius Rhodius*, *Lucan's Pharsalia*, the Italian epics of chivalry, such as those of *Tasso* and *Ariosto*, and we might include here *Spenser's Faery Queen*, the historical epic such as *Voltaire's Henriade* and *Camons' Lusiads*, and the religious epic represented by *Klopstock's Messiah*. Midway between the primitive epic, hewn out of living rock, and the more

modern, at times decadent, epic, there is a type which combines the vigor of the primitives with the felicity of expression of the moderns. Such are the *Aeneid*, the *De Rerum Natura*, *Paradise Lost*, and the *Divine Comedy*. Such a broad view of many peoples and many lands, the variety of ideas and yet the astonishing similarity of ideals and unity of purpose observed in many books of widely separated countries and ages deserves much more to be called a liberal education than the ordinary parsing of verb and noun, or the fixing of the attention upon a single isolated work without reference to any others of the same type.

The obvious objection to such a program is that lack of time would forbid it. Of course it would be impossible for each member of a class to read all of these books, but it is perfectly possible for each one to read a different book and report on its contents. In this way a synoptic conception of the whole matter is gained. Furthermore an interest in reading is aroused in this way such as would scarcely come about in any other, for the integration of the separate parts, the focusing of the attention upon a single fact from varying angles, holds the interest of the student as no disconnected reading ever could.

In like manner the lyric may be studied comparatively. It is interesting, for example, to trace the development of one type, namely the elegy, from its Greek origin where it was distinguished by its couplets of alternately long and short verses, and was used for themes of love, war, and moral admonition, into its later Greek use, where it expressed sorrow at the death of the beloved one, then into its Latin environment, where it was still distinguished by the same form but was used merely for themes of love. In English the elegy is not confined to any rigid form of versification but in content follows the late Greek elegy as its model. This we see in such poems as *Milton's Lycidas*, *Matthew Arnold's Thyrsis*, *Swinnburne's Ave atque Vale*, *Spenser's Astrophel*, and *Shelley's Adonais*.

Plato's *Apology* requires consideration from two different points of view. First of all one should study *Socrates'* significance in the history of philosophy, his changing of the center of gravity from purely cosmological questions external to man to ethical and social questions concerning man as an individual and in groups. To do this a knowledge of the pre-Socratic philosophers and their principal doctrines is essential. Secondly, one may study the *Apology* as a type of biographical literature of a very distinct kind. In the *Apology* we have an account of a real human being, who lived unselfishly, who spent his days and nights teaching his followers to lead a rational life, and, therefore, according to his doctrines, an upright life. From the people as a whole he received nothing but jeers and curses and, finally, due to a combination of a sense of humor and a sense of justice, he chose to die rather than give up his teaching. Here we have the portrayal of the best man that the Greeks ever knew—and it differs from their portrayal of that other great unselfish figure in Greek literature, *Prometheus*, in that the latter was a hero of the far-distant past and consequently was credited with certain divine or at least superhuman characteristics, whereas *Socrates* was portrayed by his own disciple, with a

certain amount of idealism, no doubt, yet free from all the trappings of divinity. . . .

Lucian's True History is representative of a type which has been popular in all ages—the romantic adventure. The literary progenitor of the type is Homer, particularly in that part of the Odyssey in which Odysseus is represented as descending to the underworld. This type is of a two-fold nature: the one aims to delight through the sheer incredibility of the tale, the other uses the narrative merely as an instrument of satire. To the first division belongs that part of the Odyssey already mentioned, as well as many of the Greek romances of the Alexandrian and Byzantine periods. Here also belong a large number of medieval French romances and the modern scientific extravaganzas of Jules Verne and H. G. Wells. To the second and much more important division, the satirical, belong a host of works which have been of the utmost importance in the history of literature. Here one must place Lucian's True History and the Golden Ass of Apuleius; here also Rabelais' Gargantua and Pantagruel. Don Quixote, which strove by satire to put an end to the romances of chivalry finds a place in this group, as also Gulliver's Travels. Voltaire's Candide, which held up to ridicule the optimism of Leibnitz, and Samuel Butler's Erewhon and Erewhon Revisited, with their ridicule of Mrs. Grundy and the Church of England, must both be included in this type. By the very nature of comedy, which consists partly in hyperbole, and by the very nature of satire, which strives to destroy a thing by making it ridiculous, the romantic adventure has been frequently employed as an instrument of reform.

. . . The knowledge of the history of a work of art illuminates it, and makes it more beautiful and more precious to the individual, just as . . . with one's native country a knowledge of its history, of its struggles toward perfection, of its successes and failures makes it all the richer and more full of meaning. The appreciation of art is, of course, subjective, as one will readily admit if one considers the difference in effect of some supremely beautiful thing on a Francis Thompson and on a Fiji Islander. If this is so, it is obvious that the wider and deeper the experience of a man—and what is reading but a shortcut to experience?—the greater will be his appreciation of a given work of art. The historical or comparative method, then, not only is of value in itself but it reacts upon and increases the esthetic enjoyment which, after all, is the main thing in art.

C. K.

MODERN GREEK AS AN AID TO THE TEACHER OF ANCIENT GREEK¹

Philhellenism in the United States was subjected in November, 1920, to a serious shock in the defeat at the polls of Eleutherios Venizelos and the Greek Liberal Party. The great leader's achievements during the decade then just closing had foreshadowed a period of political and social reconstruction in Greece, and a revival in art and literature, that might once again, in the ardent life of this small but vigorous

nation, have challenged the Western world to new and loftier ideals of liberty and culture. For Venizelos is a progressive revolutionary who sympathizes deeply with all that is sound and sane in the whole range of human endeavor. He has already committed himself to a definite program of reform in legislation dealing with land tenure, the rights of labor, and popular education, a program which is bound, when once adopted, to give Hellenic individualism a new incentive to effort. His advanced views on education, and in particular his attitude toward the Greek language question will be referred to again in the course of my paper. Whatever may be the final outcome of the present Hellenic imbroglio, the seed already sown is destined, so at least a lover of Greece and her language believes, to come sooner or later to full fruition. Meanwhile, we can only wait.

It may be accepted as axiomatic that whatever facilitates taking in the thought of a foreign language directly, without the intervention of translation into English, is helpful in the acquisition of that language. Thought seeks expression in speech, and speech is usually provocative of thought in the speaker himself and in those who listen, much as an inductive wire charged with an electric current superinduces a current in neighboring and parallel wires. Speech development in peoples as well as in individuals keeps even pace with intellectual progress. In fact, thought could never have taken linguistically written form had it not first been expressed in uttered speech. In other words, language presupposes a *lingua*; the English tongue could not have arisen elsewhere than on the tongues of English men and English women. This palpable fact finds convincing illustration in the difficulty experienced when an effort is made to teach the deaf mute to use language (that is, actual words, whether expressed by the fingers, or written on paper), instead of that which is rather malappropriately called the *sign-language*.

A most interesting and suggestive paper was recently read, at a meeting of The New York Classical Club, by Professor George L. Hendrickson, of Yale University, which went far toward proving that to the Greeks and the Romans 'reading' always meant what we should call reading aloud; that they had scarcely developed at all the faculty of reading to themselves, silently. It was apparently easier for them to take in the thought of what they were reading if they formed the words orally and heard them with their own ears. I was particularly interested in this paper, for it seems to me to furnish powerful support for certain theses in linguistic study that have always appealed to me as a teacher. The first of these is that time expended in reading a passage of Greek or Latin aloud, whether in the recitation-room, or in the learner's own study, is never time thrown away, particularly if the student has been trained to this habit from the very beginning of his studies, or can compel himself, even later in his course, to think, as he utters them, what the words mean. We shall thus be doing, though not in Rome, as the Romans did. The second thesis is that this habit of reading

¹ This paper was read at the Fifteenth Annual Meeting of The Classical Association of the Atlantic States, at Hunter College, April 22, 1921. The paper in no way aims to be a treatise on Modern Greek. It should rather be regarded as a protest against the idea that language is to be acquired by thumbing grammar, lexicon, and text-book. I believe that in studying the Ancient languages, exactly as in studying the Modern, appeal must be made to the ear, that practice must be furnished by the tongue, and that the study of Modern Greek is an interesting way of applying these principles.